

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of operating a web site, comprising:
 - a) identifying a first visitor to the web site;
 - b) performing background research on the first visitor;
 - 5 c) based on the background research, selecting first information from a collection of information; and
 - d) transmitting the first information to the first visitor.

2. Method according to claim 1, and further comprising:
 - 10 e) identifying a second visitor to the web site;
 - f) performing second background research on the second visitor;
 - g) based on the second background research, selecting, from the collection of information, second information which is different from the first information; and
 - 15 h) transmitting the second information to the second visitor.

3. Method according to claim 1, wherein the first background research comprises contacting another web site.

- 20 4. Method according to claim 2, wherein the second background research comprises contacting said other web site.

5. A method of operating a web site, comprising:
 - a) receiving an inquiry from a visitor to the web site;
 - 25 b) estimating whether the visitor possesses selected characteristics;
 - c) based on the estimate, selecting first information from a collection of information;

d) in response to the inquiry, selecting second information; and
 e) compiling the first and second information into a message, and
 transmitting the message to the visitor.

5 6. Method according to claim 5, wherein the message comprises a
 web page.

7. Method according to claim 5, wherein the message comprises an
 electronic mail message.

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8. Method according to claim 5, wherein the selected characteristics
 comprise the specific identity of the visitor.

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9. Method according to claim 8, wherein the selected characteristics
 contain no characteristics in addition to the specific identity of the
 individual.

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10. A method of operating a web site, comprising:
 a) receiving an inquiry from a visitor to the web site;
 b) ascertaining identity of the visitor;
 c) based on the identity, deriving visitor-specific information;
 d) based on the inquiry, deriving response information; and
 e) compiling the visitor-specific information and the response
 information into a message, and transmitting the message to the visitor.

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11. Method according to claim 10, wherein the message comprises a
 web page.

12. Method according to claim 10, wherein the message comprises an electronic mail message.

5 13. A method of operating a web site, comprising:

- a) receiving an inquiry from a visitor to the web site;
- b) making an estimate of selected characteristics of the visitor;
- c) asking the visitor whether customer-specific information is desired and, if so, deriving customer-specific information based on the
10 estimate;
- d) based on the inquiry, selecting second information from the collection; and
- e) compiling the first and second information into a message, and transmitting the message to the visitor.